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ABSTRACT

Views on sources of stress on college faculty and strategies for its management were obtained at small-group sessions in the 1980 faculty orientation at Prince George's Community College, Maryland. Sixteen faculty groups generated 218 responses expressing sources of job stress, a complete listing of which is appended. The responses were aggregated into the following four categories: academic affairs or faculty-associated problems, student affairs or student-associated problems, business affairs or fiscally-related problems, and college-wide or miscellaneous problems. Concerns included the following: time pressures or constraints related to the functioning of the college bureaucracy (nonteaching duties, the evaluation process); dissatisfaction with support for the faculty (marketing and retention pressures, not enforcing prerequisites); concerns about wages and contracts and physical plant operations; and not being involved in college decision-making. Stress management responses were also analyzed in the same four categories, and the distribution of problem-solving perceptions among groups was also checked. A list of the strategies is appended. Additionally, possible organizational responses to professional burnout were classified into the following four approaches: the authoritarian-moral approach, the clinical approach, the training approach, and the systems approach. It is suggested that a useful approach to analyzing organizational behavior is the diagnostic matrix, which is appended. This approach permits analysis into who is contributing to what (membership and institutional product), and how they are doing it (control). (SW)

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PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Report No. 81-13: Sources of Faculty Stress and Strategies for Its Management

Introduction

An important body of data resulted from small-group sessions in the 1980 faculty orientation. The topic was "faculty burnout." Sources of stress and coping strategies particular to our College were at issue. According to William White, the resource person and discussion leader, manifestations of faculty stress may be physical, psychological, or behavioral. White had grouped symptoms of professional stress under six headings: those affecting an individual's health, behavior, emotional adjustment, relationships, attitudes, and values. But according to another source (Maslach, 1978), "burnout" can be defined as a distinct kind of faculty stress. This would be "the emotional exhaustion resulting from stressful interpersonal contact." An example would be a professional losing sympathy for his or her students, evidenced by cynical "put downs." Other emotional symptoms might range from insomnia to ulcers, with consequent weakening of performance (Kahn, 1978). After an emotionally trying day spent with students, a burned out faculty member might want to get away from everybody, even family and friends (Maslach, p. 57).

Burnout was originally used to describe some problems of social workers. Changing conditions in higher education have led to its application to faculty members. Demands for accountability have grown as abilities of entering students have declined. The future looks different from what most professionals expected when they got into teaching. Organizational indicators of professional burnout include (1) low morale, (2) turf-guarding, (3) "we-they" polarizations, (4) conflicts over authority, (5) scapegoating organizational leaders, (6) absenteeism or resignations, and (7) rigid communication channels (White, 1980).

Previous Research

Recent studies investigating sources of stress in education have been mostly at the elementary or secondary school level. Such studies have tended to rely on data from questionnaires. Kyriacou and Sutcliffe (1977, p. 305) pointed out some problems of this method:

> Such methods fail to take into account the fact that different teachers may interpret the meaning of the questions differently, that their responses may be affected by ego-defensive processes, and that teachers may genuinely lack insight into their situation. Furthermore, stress is essentially multifactorial, and as such research must aim not simply to identify the sources of stress, but also to uncover the pattern of relationships.

Acknowledging these standards, what sources of stress have been identified in prior research? A review of seven studies (Coates and

Thoresen, 1976) found sources of stress in time demands, troubles with students, large class size, financial constraints, and lack of resources. A literature review (Kyriacou and Sutcliffe, 1977) reported that clerical duties, negative student attitudes, inadequate salaries, poor working conditions, and too wide a range of student abilities were common complaints. Wide ability range was mentioned in several studies.

Lack of faculty participation in planning has been experienced as another stress factor. Teachers who felt "decisionally deprived" reported significantly lower satisfaction and more job tension (Belasco and Alutto, 1972). Some teachers were uncomfortable working an impersonal school assembly line. They said they had "no control over the products, the design of the end product, nor the process to achieve that final result" (Selden, 1976, p. 32). Three conditions contribute to teacher frustration (Adams, 1975): (1) conflicting values, (2) increased demand for public accountability, and (3) "the good shepherd ethic," requiring teachers to guarantee success (student-centered teaching and individualized instruction). This is difficult to do in today's mass education. Public education has had to subordinate diversity for efficiency, creativity to standardized curricula, and individual attention to group-oriented instruction. For some faculty members, commitment to the individual development ethic can create dissatisfaction with self as well as the system. At the other end of the spectrum, maintaining high standards at the cost of losing most of the class can also produce a new set of tensions.

Method of the Analysis

Data were available from small group processes used in the "Faculty Burnout" workshop at the time of the fall 1980 orientation. The workshop leader had assigned faculty members randomly to small groups which met twice. In the morning session, participants were instructed to list the greatest sources of stress experienced in performing their college roles. These sources of stress were written on newsprint, for posting in a large meeting hall immediately after the small-group process. A similar procedure was repeated in the afternoon, when the groups discussed specific strategies for managing stress. The workshop leader reviewed these responses at the final meeting of the total group. The newsprint record therefore constituted the data base for this report. The responses were aggregated into categories reflecting the way the College is organized. Responses were analyzed to determine how often the sixteen small groups mentioned a problem or solution, and the number of groups expressing a similar point of view.

Findings

The sixteen faculty groups generated 218 responses expressing sources of job stress. (A complete response listing is given in the Appendix.) These were aggregated into four classifications:

	Number of Mentions	Percent of Mentions
A. Academic affairs or faculty-associated problems	71	32%
B. Student affairs or student-associated problems	61	28%
C. Business affairs or fiscally-related problems	32	15%
D. College-wide or miscellaneous problems	54	25%
TOTAL	218	100%

The frequency count of responses suggested the intensity of feeling about stressor categories. Another measure showed how wide-spread the perceptions were, namely the number of faculty groups mentioning each item. This distribution of mentions across different groups was found to resemble the pattern of "total mentions." Thus the responses were consistent in showing that the perceptions of stress source were wide-spread at the same time that they were intense.

Academic Affairs/Faculty-Associated Problems

There were 71 mentions classifiable under the heading of academic affairs or faculty-related problems. An important underlying concern was seen to be time pressures or constraints related to the functioning of the College "bureaucracy" (no... teaching duties, the evaluation process, no compensatory time to improve programs). In addition, there were some signs of apathy and boredom related to "not being involved" in the academic community (faculty apatny, no faculty interaction, bored with the same thing over and over). The complete list is shown in Table 1.

Student Affairs/Student-Associated Problems

Among the 61 student affairs/student-related stressors, an important element seemed to be dissatisfaction with support for the faculty (marketing and retention pressures, not enforcing pre-requisites, not backing up faculty in student disputes). Another element had to do with the calibre or aggressiveness of students (ability decline; student hostility, complaints, apathy, ability range in the same class).

Business-Related Problems

There were 32 stress sources identified under the business heading (see Table 1, continued). These included concerns about wages and contracts, physical plant operations, and personal safety or theft in the evenings.

College-Wide or Miscellaneous Problems

Among the 54 "higher policy level" or miscellaneous problems was prominent mention of not being involved in the decision making, being treated like children, and over-doing the use of restrictions and regulations to solve problems --- perhaps with favoritism instead of rewards for merit. The picture emerges of some feeling they are part of an "out-group" with respect to college-wide problem solving and goal achievement.

Strategies for Coping with Stress

Stress management responses were also analyzed in the same four categories. This was to see how the solutions "matched up with" the problems. Another interest was to discover how the stress-management specifics could be implemented within the College's existing organizational structure. The findings were as follows (see Table 2 for detail):

	Number of Mentions	Percent of Mentions
A. Academic affairs or faculty-associated issues	39	26%
B. Student affairs or student-related issues	31	20%
C. Business affairs or financially-related issues	26	17%
D. College-wide or miscellaneous issues	57	37%
TOTAL	153	100%

The distribution of problem-solving perceptions among groups was also checked. It appeared to reflect the percentage distribution of the number of mentions.

Academic Affairs/Faculty-Related Strategies

There were 39 stress-management strategies classifiable in the academic affairs or faculty-associated area. Some of these were non-specific signs of need for faculty support in the role of instruction. (Examples: promote high standards/excellence, faculty support groups, support for curriculum development or a variety of instructional methods.) Other suggestions appeared to see low value or even uselessness in certain time-consuming activities that could be "decided" out of existence. (Samples: simpler evaluations, eliminate certain meetings.) A few had to do with innovations in teaching activity. (Examples: part time - full time partnerships, teaching new courses outside the department.)

Student Affairs/Student Issues

What to do in the student arena was somewhat clearly expressed: (1) enforce the pre-requisites and place students effectively; (2) publicize a clear statement of student responsibilities; and (3) support faculty members when they have conflicts with students.

Business-Related Issues

While the desire to share fiscal decisions seemed mostly non-specific, some ideas seemed imaginative: increase resources for conferences, create a grant development office, establish foundations to encourage and receive donations.

College-wide/Miscellaneous Issues

Better communication, rewards for merit, and positive thinking were examples of what could be done College-wide. Some suggestions noted the need to interact with the world outside the College (exchange programs, outside interests or work, getting away during vacation time) as a way of relieving stress. It was noted that 57 strategies for stress-management needed to be classified under broad categories such as better communication.

Interpretation Criteria

As discussion leader, William White classified possible organizational responses to professional burnout into four approaches:

(1) *The Authoritarian-Moral Approach:* Burnout shows character problems or malice. The organization should therefore impose sanctions. This approach ignores situational factors, stops communication, and avoids seeing the underlying problems.

(2) *The Clinical Approach:* Burnout indicates individual deviance or pathology. Clinical diagnosis and therapy are indicated. This approach individualizes relationship problems and fails to look at the total work environment. It can isolate the individual and hasten the burnout process.

(3) *The Training Approach:* Burnout results from skill deficiencies. The organization can provide training for stress and time management. This approach ignores the need to change the environment.

(4) *The Systems Approach:* Burnout is a breakdown in mutually supportive interactions between individual and community. Individual troubles are seen as "family" problems. The answer is to change the work situation and support the individual, at least by contributing a climate where coping methods can work. Typical objectives are to modify the sources of stress while improving access to support networks.

The Diagnostic Matrix

One useful approach to analyzing organizational behavior is the "Diagnostic Matrix." (See appendix.) This approach permits analysis into who is contributing to what (membership and institutional product), and

how they are doing it (control), as the organization fulfills its mission. The following represents an analysis of stress significance in the context of diagnostic elements which describe organizational behavior:

Elements	Analysis
1. Yield - educated students	1. Not much problem, more concern about student abilities at the input stage.
2. Role	2. Not much problem, but some signs of faculty as "experts" feeling dissatisfied with administration.
3. Structure	3. Some frustration about the way faculty needs are being met.
4. Power	4. Persuasion is being asked for when it's time for many to act together.
5. Goals	5. Not clear to some faculty how College goals relate to their values on the one hand, and performance on the other.
6. Communication	6. Needed to support faculty, direct mutual energy, and share information about the goal of an educated, self-determining and highly skilled student.
7. Inclusion	7. The sense of belonging seems strong, but give-and-take could stand some improvement.
8. Status	8. More recognition and reward seem needed for meritorious individual initiative of faculty members.
9. Norms	9. As conditions have changed (older, female, more minority students), some seem to be trying to keep up 1970 standards, while others formulate new standards for 1990. There doesn't seem to be adequate communication to bridge the thrust of these different efforts.

Discussion

More extensive dialogue would be needed to be more specific as to what to do about stress. But some general strategies seem indicated. Administators might try to be more sensitive to faculty problems expressed here.

Faculty members might try to communicate with each other which stressors are unavoidable. The changing community college mission, the changing student population, and the tightening economic situation are factors we cannot avoid in our changing society. What might administrators do? Give information as problems arise. Increase faculty participation in decisions that affect them directly. Where no compromise is feasible, explain clearly. A few faculty comments suggested that some decisions were seen as "arbitrary," orders from authority, with little or no justification. The faculty, as professionals, seem to expect clear statements of rationale, perhaps in greater depth, compared with what they have been receiving in a changing situation. Ways to cope with stress might well be explored under the authority and leadership of the deans. But there is also a collective responsibility for managing change and conflict. This need might be considered in the master planning process.

Paul Larkin
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Table 1

PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Sources of Faculty Stress

	# of Mentions	# of Groups
Academic affairs or faculty-associated problems	*71*	*n.a.*
Too many non-teaching duties, committees, required meetings	13	8
Faculty apathy	11	8
Evaluation process time-consuming, lacks credibility	9	7
No faculty-faculty interaction	7	7
Unequal class sizes, classes too large	7	6
No release time to update programs, no sabbaticals	6	6
No opportunities for professional growth	4	4
Too many part-time faculty, or part-time faculty misperceptions	4	4
Bored doing same thing over and over	3	3
Associate Dean's role ambiguity	2	2
Inconsistent grading standards	2	2
Weak Faculty Senate	2	2
Covering material in 16 weeks	1	1

Table 1 (Cont.)

Sources of Faculty Stress

	# of Mentions	# of Groups
Student affairs or student-associated problems	*61*	*n.a.*
Marketing emphasis on retention, pressures to reduce standards, quantity vs. quality	17	10
Decline in ability	11	10
Student hostility, complaints	9	7
Lack of student motivation, interest	9	6
Wide range of ability in same class	5	5
Inadequate enforcement of pre-requisites, improper placement	3	2
Administration does not back up faculty in disputes with students	2	2
Uncertainty of schedules	2	2
Changing student population	2	2
Student smoking in buildings	1	1
Business affairs or fiscally-related problems	*32*	*n.a.*
Inadequate salaries, inflation, ceilings	7	6
No security, terminal contracts	6	5
Improper room temperature	5	4
Inadequate office space	4	3
Lack of faculty support resources	3	3
Personal safety, theft (evenings)	2	2
Parking inconvenient	2	2
Distance between classes	2	2
Predictions of 'doom and gloom'	1	1

Table 1 (Cont.)

Sources of Faculty Stress

	# of Mentions	# of Groups
College-wide or miscellaneous problems	*54*	*n.a.*
Lack of faculty influence in planning or decision-making	20	12
Paternalistic attitude towards faculty, lack of trust in faculty	10	7
Too many rules and regulations	8	5
Arbitrary decisions, favoritism	4	4
No rewards for hard work, excellence	4	4
Restrictions on outside employment	3	2
No recognition of faculty achievements	2	2
Too many administrators	2	2
No time for family, outside interests	1	1

SOURCE: Original records from small-group sessions, Faculty Orientation, August 1980.

2/24/81

Table 2

PRINCE GEORGE'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Strategies for Managing Stress

	# of Mentions	# of Groups
Academic affairs or faculty-associated issues	*39*	*n.a.*
Promote high standards, academic excellence	9	6
Reduce and simplify evaluations	5	4
Eliminate required meetings during Orientation	4	4
Set up faculty support groups	4	4
Reinstitute sabbatical leave	3	3
Provide time/support for curriculum development	3	3
Teach at students' level	3	3
Allow small sections of advanced courses	2	2
Use a variety of instructional methods	2	2
Extend time final exams -- date grades due	1	1
Pair part-time teachers with full-time faculty	1	1
Balance class sizes	1	1
Teach new courses -- even outside department	1	1

Table 2 (Cont.)

Strategies for Managing Stress

	# of Mentions	# of Groups
Student affairs or student-related issues	*31*	*n.a.*
Enforce prerequisites, realistic placement	12	9
Agree on and publicize student responsibilities	9	7
Support faculty in conflicts with students	5	5
Increase student-faculty interaction	2	1
Involve faculty in high school articulation	1	1
Switch to a quarter system	1	1
Enforce the student code of conduct	1	1
Business affairs or financially-related issues	*26*	*n.a.*
Share all fiscal/managerial decision-making with faculty	9	7
Maintain physical plant, security	5	4
Increase resources for conferences, professional development	4	3
Have realistic cost-of-living increases	3	3
Create a grant development office	2	2
Establish a foundation to encourage donations	1	1
Provide pay incentives for further education	1	1
Provide early retirement incentives	1	1

Table 2 (Cont.)

Strategies for Managing Stress

	# of Mentions	# of Groups
College-wide or miscellaneous issues	*57*	*n.a.*
Foster faculty-administration communication	9	9
Develop outside interests	8	6
Recognize and reward faculty excellence	6	5
Role exchange programs (other institutions?)	6	4
Think positively	6	4
Establish faculty-administration committee to implement workshop findings	4	4
Attend, speak up at Board meetings	4	3
Learn stress/time management skills	3	3
Vacation away from the area	3	2
Transfer administrative jobs to faculty	3	1
Support union	2	2
Physical exercise	2	2
Permit employment outside College	1	1

SOURCE: Original records from small-group sessions, Faculty Orientation, August 1980.

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M-C-P DIAGNOSTIC MATRIX

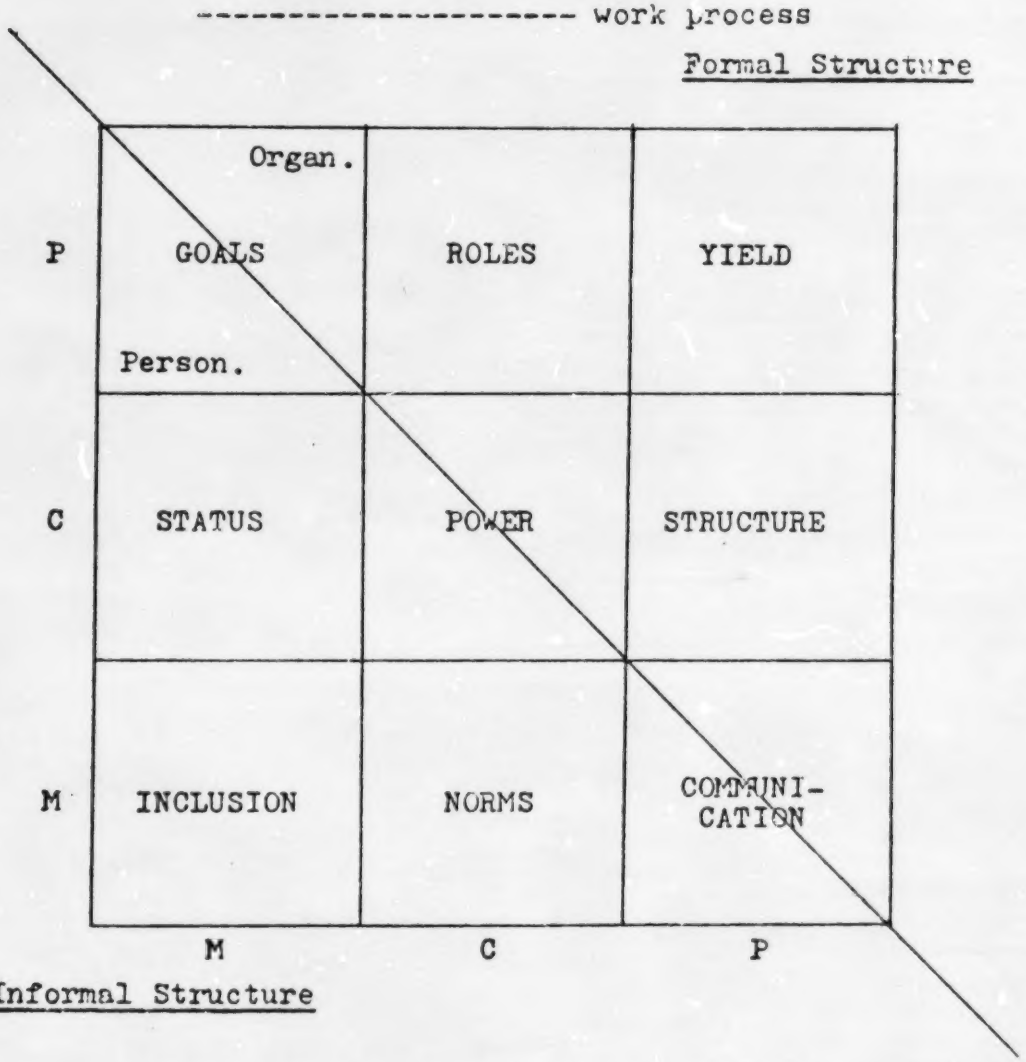
Membership - Control - Product

M (who) C (how) P (what)

people process ----------

---------- work process

Formal Structure



Informal Structure

Membership Factors: GOALS, STATUS, INCLUSION, NORMS, COMMUNICATION
Control Factors: POWER, STRUCTURE, ROLES, STATUS, NORMS
Product Factors: GOALS, ROLES, YIELD, STRUCTURE, COMMUNICATION

GRID FACTORS IN M-C-P DIAGNOSTIC MATRIX

FORMAL ELEMENTS

YIELD: A product factor. The end-results of task production which affect the organization's contribution to its environment, to its own self-maintenance, and to the people who serve in the organization. The material realization of the organizational goals. YIELD is seen as both external and internal, as tangible and qualitative, as reward and punishment, as new potential and depletion, as a series of transactions within the environment that express the values of those holding membership.

ROLE: A control-product factor. Prescribed patterns of behavior identified with specific organizational functions. ROLES focus and direct use of energy, clarify relationships between members, and groups within an organization, and define the hierarchial structure. They represent functions and relationships that are effectively more important to the organization than to the individual.

STRUCTURE: A control-product factor. The formal definition of how an organization will accomplish its goals, including how its various parts are to work together. The ordering together of people and resources in defined relationships that channel work flow (energy) towards production. STRUCTURE is often though of as rigid but in reality is highly responsive to internal and external influence.

FORMAL-INFORMAL BRIDGE ELEMENTS

POWER: A control factor. Ability to influence decisions about people and resources. POWER is organic and/or vested; having to do with both inherent capabilities of an individual and assigned authority. POWER can be taken or given by use but not by abdication. In an organization, POWER is directed through the formal channels of roles and structure, and through the informal channels of status and norms. POWER is expressed as control (force), as manipulation (hidden influence), or as persuasion. It is exercised personally by virtue of the way a person perceives himself in relationship to other persons and groups.

GOALS: A membership-product factor. The targets toward which purposeful focus of energy is directed within an organization, the material results of which is yield. To be useful, GOALS will be time-structured, specific, feasible, measurable, known by those whose efforts will be needed for their accomplishment, and able to elicit the necessary commitment. A useful set of GOALS will also provide a basis for evaluation at some future point in time. GOALS are the tie-rods between the organization and its environment, between the

formal and informal structures of the organization, between internal maintenance and production needs and between group/team identification and the meeting of personal needs of the people in the organization.

COMMUNICATION: A membership-product factor. The process of sending and receiving data which has purposeful meaning to both sender and receiver. Within an organization, COMMUNICATION takes place in well defined but different ways within the formal and informal structures. It is used to establish and support human relationships, to direct and focus energy, and to transmit information needed for product functions. Diagnostically, the direction, quantity and quality of interpersonal communication is a behavioral statement of the functional health of the organization.

INFORMAL ELEMENTS

INCLUSION: A membership factor. The process of integrating new members into an organization and the maintenance of a sense of belonging with older members. Relationship building; job training; organization awareness. INCLUSION involves the feelings and behavior of people and their confrontations with similarities and differences in each other, the building of give-and-take relationships, and coping with the dynamics of acceptance and rejection.

STATUS: A membership-control factor. The quantitative ability to be influential in decision making as a product of the combined authority vested in the role and the individual initiative of the person.

NORMS: A membership-control factor. NORMS are the unwritten rules of group behavior (the informal structure) which are initiated and maintained by collective human behavior. These are influenced initially by the expectations, attitudes and assumptions which members bring to a group. A NORM is feeling-oriented and sanctioned by consensus, as the result of real or implied behavior in groups. It is operative only as long as it is reinforced by further behavior or stands unchallenged by differing behavior. NORMS can be perceived as restrictive or generative, according to their influence on the effective functioning of the organization.

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